

Appl. No. 09/781,755

**In the Claims:**

Please amend the claims as follows.

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1. (Amended) A system for verifying the purchase of a retail item by a customer comprising:

a label associated with the retail item, said label lacking a post-purchase machine-readable indicia;

a point of sale encoding device, said encoding device providing a machine-readable post-purchase indicia associated with the label during purchase by the customer; and

a detecting device for analyzing the label to determine whether the post-purchase machine-readable indicia is present.

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14. (Amended) A method for verifying the purchase of a retail item by a customer comprising:

providing a label associated with the retail item, said label lacking a machine-readable post-purchase indicia;

encoding a machine-readable post-purchase indicia associated with the label by a point of sale encoding device when the item is purchased by the customer; and

analyzing said label with a detecting device to determine whether the machine-readable post-purchase indicia is present.

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Please add the following new claims.

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16. The method of claim 14 wherein the encoding of the post-purchase indicia produces an invisible post-purchase indicia.

17. The system of claim 1 wherein said encoding device provides the machine readable indicia when the label is scanned during purchase.

18. The system of claim 14 wherein the encoding is performed when the label is scanned during purchase.

19. The system of claim 1 wherein the post-purchase indicia is removable after the retail item is exchanged or refunded.

20. The method of claim 14 wherein the post-purchase indicia is removable after the retail item is exchanged or refunded.

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